



THE LEFT GUILD

a club at Los Altos High School

201 Almond Ave
Los Altos, CA 94024
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

APR 29 2015

Dear Superintendent Torlakson,

In light of the student protests last fall in Jefferson County, Colorado, over the AP US History curriculum, a committee of students and one US History teacher at Los Altos High School in Los Altos, California have extensively reviewed the United States History standards in California for the 11th Grade. We have deemed these standards to be sanitized and misrepresentative of the actual historical record. The standards consistently obfuscate and/or outright ignore the crimes against humanity upon which the United States was formed and continues to function.

Additionally, the standards de-emphasize and ignore the role of militant struggle by the oppressed in achieving true gains in human rights, social justice, and ecological sustainability. The net result of this curricular marginalization and exclusion is to breed passivity within today's youth toward the need to confront and overcome unpleasant truths.

In particular, the current US History standards in California fail to adequately address the following realities. For each topic, we reference notable scholars and historical research that can be utilized to responsibly transform the state standards.

- The history, culture, and larger role of Native American civilizations in what today is called the "United States." ^{5, 18, 19, 28, 31}
- The scale, depth, and details of the European settler land theft from and genocide of Native Americans in North America. ^{16, 18, 19, 21, 27, 28, 31}
- The centrality of slavery to the development of US capitalism and the genocidal realities of US slavery. ^{4, 18, 22, 30, 31}
- The centrality of imperialism and brutal conquest to the expansion of US "territory" during the 19th and early 20th centuries, including the invasions and occupations of Mexico, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Guam, the Philippines, Central American countries, Haiti, and many others. ^{5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 18, 20, 24, 28, 31}

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- The true extent of US war crimes during WWII, particularly the massive firebombing of Japanese cities and the absolutely unjustifiable dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.^{3, 5, 6, 14, 18, 31}
- The actual holocaust inflicted on the “third world” by the US government in the decades following WWII, resulting in the needless deaths of hundreds of millions from US soldiers, CIA operatives, and US-backed security forces, as well as from conditions of poverty maintained and expanded by US-enforced global capitalism.^{5, 7, 10, 17, 18, 31}
- The full record of repression—including frame-ups, torture, and assassinations—by the US government against “third world” and anti-imperialist activists within US borders during the 1960s and 1970s.^{5, 7, 18, 28, 31}
- The recent wars of aggression and major war crimes committed by US government in the Middle East.^{5, 18, 28, 31}
- The racism of the War on Drugs and the realities of mass incarceration and police brutality in the US today.^{1, 2, 23, 28, 31}
- The depth and extent of white supremacy, patriarchy, homophobia, and class exploitation throughout US history in shaping the structures and practices of power in this country.^{2, 4, 11, 13, 18, 23, 28, 31}
- The centrality of protest movements, radicalism, and civil disobedience to achieving greater rights in U.S. history, including labor, anti-racist, anti-imperialist, feminist, and youth movements.^{1, 17, 18, 20, 22, 25, 31}

Beyond the omission or marginalization of the aforementioned topics, we object to the *authoritative* style of depiction employed in numerous textbooks. The textbooks do not provide any citations for their sources and present highly biased statements as one-dimensional “facts”. We seek uncertainty; that is, textbooks should not speak with confidence on issues that are still in dispute today.

We appreciate your progressive educational leadership in our state. We respectfully request a meeting with you to discuss these matters in person. Moreover, we request that you advocate for a new commission of scholars—particularly progressive and feminist historians of color—to revise the US history standards for our state so that what is taught in California’s classrooms begins to more effectively match reality and thereby empower students to transform our society for the better. This is, as stated by the American Historical Association, the reason we study history: “[so that] we emerge with relevant skills and an enhanced capacity for informed citizenship, critical thinking, and simple awareness.”

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or if we can be of assistance in resolving this matter.

April 24, 2015

Sincerely,

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